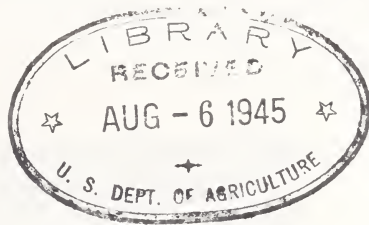


Historic, Archive Document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

Ec 7 Cp

County Planning Series
No. 3



The Land Use Planning Organization

The land use planning program works through community, county, and State committees and subcommittees. Accurate reflection of the opinion of the people in localities, as well as in larger areas, is essential to the success of the program, and it has been found that the best way to get this representative reflection of views is through the committee form of organization.

Obviously, it is not possible for all farmers and agricultural experts to participate directly in meetings for community, county, and State planning. Such meetings would be too large and unwieldy for practical purposes, and the planning work itself includes a great deal more than merely meeting to make decisions about problems. Time and effort are required in investigating problems, analyzing and discussing them, formulating suggestions for solutions, and working toward obtaining the solutions that are proposed.

For these reasons, representative committees are established to determine the facts regarding conditions, whether in a community or a larger area, to draw up plans for immediate and for long-time improvement where that is needed, and then to encourage action in the ways suggested in the plans. The work itself and the form of organization through which it is done make the elective choice of members the most suitable method of insuring representative committees.

Prepared by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, in cooperation with the Extension Service and the Soil Conservation Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

Issued May 1940

167121°--40

All Farmers in Area Represented.

Membership of community committees is composed entirely of farm people. These committees form the foundation of land use planning. From the discussions and planning of farmers on community committees develops the work of the county committees, where farmer membership is in the majority. The work of the county committees, in turn, contributes to State and national land use planning. Representative farmer membership is maintained throughout.

This is no accident. Land use planning was organized in recognition of the need for farmers' participation in making basic plans that would be a guide to public programs for their areas. The Department of Agriculture and the land-grant colleges, as well as farm leaders, have long felt that farmers would be better served if they had more active part in planning and applying agricultural programs. It was recognized that farmers, more than anyone else, are familiar with general local conditions and problems.

The need for farmers to take part in guiding public agricultural programs is apparent. Then, too, the bread-and-butter interests of farmers, as well as their social interests, are bound up closely with public programs and policies that affect agriculture and the land. Under our democratic form of government it is necessary, therefore, that farmers' views be given full expression in the determination of policies. The organization of the land use planning program provides the mechanism whereby the views of farmers—North, South, East, and West—can be assembled and made known in Washington as well as in the individual States, counties, and communities. Agricultural planning thus provides an opportunity for farmers to use the tools of democracy.

Other Advantages From Committee Efforts.

But there are other advantages to be gained, too. Local, State, and national programs for agriculture are operating in thousands of localities. Each of these programs is doing its part in a common task, and the sum of all their operations covers the entire field of national public planning and action in agriculture. Because of this wide range of public activities, some sort of local-State-regional agricultural planning organization is needed to help direct the cooperative attack on agricultural problems. Such organization is necessary to harmonize farm programs and to avoid overlapping and confusion in their operation.

Farmers on land use planning committees contribute their

practical, on-the-ground knowledge of local conditions to the planning job. The farmers' everyday working knowledge of each locality and farm is vital to public agencies in their efforts to make their work fit local conditions. Without the help of farmers, the specialized knowledge of agricultural technicians and program administrators is much less effective. The necessary planning, then, is a cooperative task between farmers, technicians, and administrators, with each group making its special contributions to the development of workable plans.

The present organization for land use planning had its beginnings in a conference at Mount Weather, Va., on July 8, 1938, between representatives of State agricultural colleges and the Department of Agriculture. Those in attendance agreed that farmers could and should take a more active part in planning for public-action programs. It was agreed also that new procedures were needed to enable farmers to participate in the study and analysis of basic land use problems. New methods of organization were necessary to bring together the knowledge, facilities, and experience of the land-grant colleges and the Department of Agriculture in helping farm people build constructive programs. The land use planning organization, as now being developed, seeks to embody these aims in actual practice.

The Community Organization.

Community land use planning committees are made up entirely of farm men and women, from several neighborhoods, whose interests are similar. Each committee is composed of from 3 to 12 farmers, or more. These community committees discuss their problems, reconcile their different conflicting views, and shape up ideas and recommendations before presenting them to their county committee. This is the planning process. In the county committees the plans and recommendations of the community committees are used in making plans and recommendations for the county as a whole. The process of discussion and compromise is repeated in arriving at the county plans.

The County Organization.

Farm men and women make up a majority of the county committee's membership. At least 10 farmers are members in addition to forest owners if forestry is an important resource in the county. Other members are representatives of various agencies of the Department of Agriculture, and of

other State and local agencies concerned with the use of land within the county. The committee chairman is a farmer, and the county agricultural agent usually is secretary.

Another feature of the organization is that farm men and women on the county committee include representatives from each community committee. Thus, the problems and suggested solutions presented by every community committee can be discussed and considered fully in making sound land use plans and recommendations for the county.

Much of the planning work in the county is handled on a community basis by the community committees, under guidance of the county committee. In all instances the results of community committees' activities are reviewed and discussed by the county committee in arriving at plans and recommendations for the county. Close consideration is given to plans for direct action by individuals, groups, and communities, as well as to action by public agencies—local, State, and national. Planning for the improvement of purely local situations which do not call for outside assistance is proving to be one of the most fruitful fields of work for these committees.

Land Use Maps Put Together and Studied.

In the county committee the land use classification maps, made up by the community committees, are put together and studied to determine plans and recommendations for the entire county. It is this stage of planning that begins to require active cooperation between farmers, program administrators, and technicians. Here the suggested solutions to various land use problems are considered in the light of information supplied by program administrators and technicians. The cooperation of the technicians and administrators in supplying needed research data, in pointing out workable procedures for obtaining action through their agencies, and in indicating the legislative limitations beyond which action by their agencies cannot go, is a convenience and a service of real value in making usable plans. This type of cooperation is particularly useful in developing plans upon which reasonably prompt action can be obtained.

The participation of local administrators of programs is helpful in other ways. For example, when the county committee asks for action by a specified public agency, the administrator of that agency is immediately aware of the request. If the request can be granted immediately, perhaps the administrator can quickly inform the committee of that

fact. Sometimes administrative policies can be adjusted immediately. In such instances the public agencies' representatives on the committee are a direct link between the county planning committee and administrative headquarters. Of definite aid, too, are the land-grant colleges which provide technical assistance and research facilities that may be needed to assist the committees in analyzing their problems. In other cases major changes in policy may be required, and in some, new legislation may be needed before anything can be done.

The State Organization.

The State land use planning committee's membership includes farmers from each type-of-farming area in the State, and representatives of State and Department of Agriculture agencies working with land use problems in the State. The chairman is the director of the State extension service, and the State representative of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics usually is secretary. The director of the State agricultural experiment stations is a member.

An important job of this committee is to give farmers and local and State and Department officials an opportunity to meet together and become better informed about the work each is doing. Pertinent findings and recommendations of the State committee are passed on by this committee to the Department of Agriculture. In many cases, however, immediate action can be obtained in the State through other sources than the Department, particularly when action is desired on a purely State basis and is properly a matter for local or State action.

A two-way flow of information and recommendations is established by the planning organization. The organization does more than send farmer plans and opinions to the State committees and the Department of Agriculture. Most of the planning, to be sure, does originate in the community and county committees, and plans do flow to the Department of Agriculture. Provision is made, however, for the exchange of information and conclusions between the agencies of the Department, the land-grant colleges, and the State, county, and community committees, so that plans can be agreed upon after those concerned have considered all pertinent facts. In other words, planning is not simply a matter of making recommendations but is a cooperative job to which everybody contributes his bit in reaching mutually satisfactory agreements upon plans and policies.

Subcommittees Prove Their Usefulness.

As the committees—community, county, and State alike—have organized and wrestled with their problems and in some cases sent in to Washington a comprehensive, unified set of recommendations, they have learned a good deal about ways of operating effectively. For instance, it soon became apparent that a very valuable part of the planning process was the participation of representatives of all of the agencies affected. In other words, the committees found it indispensable to success that all of those in the planning work—technicians, administrators, and farmers—work together on every problem, not just in the community, but all the way through the State committees and offices up to the national committees and offices.

Another very significant development from the experience of these committees was the realization that the work of the committee could be made far more comprehensive and valuable than it would otherwise be, if it set up subcommittees to deal with special problems. Suppose, for instance, that a county or community committee early in its work has become convinced that forestry problems are among the most important to be dealt with. If a group smaller than the whole committee, a kind of investigating and working subcommittee, is set up to look into the matter and to make a report to the whole committee, often the committee's work can be greatly speeded up. Small subcommittees are not subject to the delays that sometimes hamper consideration by a whole committee. Again, some subjects are more suited to investigation by a small group. By using this method, many of the planning committees found the usefulness of the committees could be multiplied many times.

The BAE-Land-Grant College Committees.

Land use planning in the several States is being assisted by a joint BAE-Land-Grant College Committee. This group is usually a three-man committee composed of a representative of the State extension service, the State agricultural experiment station, and the Bureau of Agricultural Economics. It is an informal working committee which suggests plans for operations, assembles material in the various counties, and contacts State and regional representatives of educational, action, and research programs to determine what each can contribute to the planning program in the way of data, personnel, and special technical assistance. Likewise

it helps determine how planning work can best serve the several operating agencies. When community or county planning committees wish to foster suggestions for needed research, their suggestions are brought to the attention of this committee for consideration and appropriate action.

State representatives of Department of Agriculture agencies provide another avenue for the exchange of information between each type of committee in land use planning work in the State and the Department of Agriculture. Hence, if a community of farmers has a suggestion or problem concerning soil conservation, for instance, this is not only submitted to their county land use planning committee, but also is talked over with the local representative of the Soil Conservation Service. He may act upon the suggestion immediately, depending upon the nature of the proposal, or acquaint the State and regional Soil Conservation Service offices with the matter so that necessary arrangements may be made whereby the Service may cooperate in the soil conservation endeavor in question. In any event the appropriate local or State representative of the Soil Conservation Service will welcome all suggestions as to where the Service may assist, and it will do whatever is possible to help the local farmers in their soil-conservation activities.

Organization in the Department.

To enable the Department of Agriculture to do its part in the planning task, the Department was reorganized in October 1938, and the Bureau of Agricultural Economics was designated as the central planning agency. The Bureau and the Extension Service cooperate in rendering guidance and assistance to the States in developing land use plans and in serving as a national clearinghouse for the planning work.

The Bureau, as the central planning agency, cooperates closely with local, State, and Department operating agencies in assisting the planning process. It helps other Department agencies to analyze the recommendations and conclusions of local planning committees and advises the committees, through or jointly with the Extension Service, of the action to be taken on their recommendations. It issues periodic progress reports on accomplishments, facts, and conclusions growing out of planning. The Bureau cooperates with Department and State agencies in studying a variety of measures provided for in public programs. It makes area analyses and land-classification studies, investigates problems of local-government reorganization, adjustment of public

services, public debt, and assessment and property-tax burdens, and compiles information on all land use problems and related subjects. These findings are passed on to farmers through the land use planning organization, to aid committees in arriving at plans and recommendations.

When recommendations of committees arrive in Washington from the States, the same effort is made to fuse the opinions of farmers, technicians, and administrators into workable plans. Here is what happens, specifically, when proposals made by the committees reach the Department of Agriculture. The proposals are placed in the hands of the interbureau coordinating committee, of which the Chief of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics is chairman, for consideration by the interbureau committee's subcommittee in charge of handling these recommendations.

This subcommittee is composed of representatives of all of the operating agencies that are interested in the recommendations and includes technicians who are working in the fields with which the recommendations deal. The subcommittee then endeavors to reach full agreement of all members on the adoption of a report. Thus, once more the fusing or synthesizing process is at work, so that everyone connected with the job—administrators, technicians, and farmers alike—understands the problems and the recommendations and is prepared to do his part toward putting the plans into effect after agreement is reached.

The next step is the sending of the report of the interbureau committee, which acts through its subcommittee, on to the Agricultural Program Board of the Department and to the Secretary of Agriculture. By the time this is done, therefore, the problems of any one county have been subjected to an intensive analysis, and the steps proposed to deal with those problems have evolved from thorough, sympathetic study by every participant in the planning process.

By means of this organization, extending from communities, through counties, and States, to the Department of Agriculture, democratic planning is being made a reality for American farmers. At the same time, the public agencies of local and State governments and the Department of Agriculture are able to obtain the benefit of farmer opinions and guidance in coordinating programs and fitting them to local needs.

Previous publications in this County Planning Series:

No. 1—County Land Use Planning.

No. 2—Membership of Land Use Planning Committees.